THE MAYORS' INSTITUTE ON

CITY DESIGN

National Endowment for the Arts/United States Conference of Mayors/American Architectural Foundation Winter 1999

Nashville's Library Design Competition

In 1996, Mayor Philip Bredesen (MICD 20) came to the Mayors' Institute with a dream for a new public library for downtown Nashville. He wanted a facility that would complement the City's efforts at downtown revitalization while creating a landmark worthy of civic pride. That dream is significantly closer to reality following a design competition earlier this year in which an architectural team and design concept were selected for the new Nashville/Davidson County Public Library.

Rendering of the winning proposal for the new Nashville/Davidson County Public Library. Courtesy of Robert A. M. Stern, Architects; rendering by Thomas W. Schaller.

During a discussion at the institute regarding alternative sites for the library, Mayor Roxanne Qualls asked a simple question, "Where is the heart of your downtown?" Bredesen looked at a map of downtown and realized he couldn't point to one. Architectural critic Christine Kreyling, of the *Nashville Scene*, believes that this was a pivotal event that resulted in Mayor Bredesen making the creation of a "heart" a central element in site selection criteria. The site that was eventually chosen was one that had not even been considered until late in the process: a failed downtown shopping mall on Church Street, Nashville's "Main Street." The site is at the foot of an existing plaza and will form one end of an axis with the Tennessee State Capitol, a Greek Revival masterpiece designed by William Strickland.

Bredesen recommends design competitions for major public buildings. "There is no question, we got better designed buildings as a result of the design competitions," referring to two recent projects that used the competition process, the library and a recently-completed downtown arena. The competitions allowed the City to focus on selecting the right design. "All three finalists were equally qualified to design a library," Bredesen comments, "so the competition put the selection of the

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AIA PLEDGES SUPPORT TO MICD ALUMNI

As part of its commitment to administer the Mayors' Institute on behalf of The National Endowment for the Arts and The US Conference of Mayors, The American Architectural Foundation has established a strategic partnership with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to provide support to MICD alumni. This partnership was strengthened by the recent establishment of the AIA's Center for Livable Communities under the direction of James C. Dinegar, AIA Vice President for Government and Industry Affairs and the Center's Director, Stephanie Bothwell, ASLA.

The Center brings together the AIA's many activities related to urban design and quality of life, including the Regional/Urban Design Committee, the Housing Professional Interest Area; and the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Teams (R/UDAT.) Center staff are contacting MICD alumni for insight into what kind of design activities mayors are engaged in and how the Center and AIA members can be of assistance.

Among the activities that are being considered are "mini-institutes" that follow the basic format of the Mayors' Institute sessions but focus on specific issues within a community; the facilitation of a "champion" who could be either a local design professional or a member of the resource team and who could act as an advisor to a mayor on a specific project; and a series of "white papers" that could serve as outlines to a mayor interested in hosting a competition, workshop, "visioning" process or other activity. For additional information, call the MICD National Office of the AIA at (202) 626-7300.★

(Nashville, continued from page 1)

design first and selection of the architect second." Another important element of Nashville's process was that funding was already in place, allowing the City to focus on getting the best design for the funds available rather than using the design process to establish the budget.

At the recommendation of library consultant Richard Walters, the City retained Roger Schluntz, FAIA, professor of architecture at the University of Miami, to supervise the library competition. Schluntz has served in this role for a number of other design competitions around the country, including one for the recently-completed addition to the Denver Public Library.

When asked if he uses an outline from which to base all design competitions, Schluntz comments, "each project has to be assessed on its own merits and specific needs, and no two are alike." He does admit, however, to following the *Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions*, published by the American Institute of Architects.

As competition supervisor, Schluntz served as a mediator between city officials, a selection committee and the competing design firms. "The key factor to a successful design competition," states Schluntz, "is for all players to understand their specific roles in the competition process and to agree on the desired outcomes." Fairness based on the agreed-upon criteria are critical to a good competition. "You don't want any surprises."

Design competitions can be "open" or "closed," depending on the number of entries accepted. The Nashville Library was closed, or "limited," in that only three design teams were allowed to participate in the actual design competition. The competition process had two phases. Phase I included a formal request for qualifications

Nashville Mayor Philip Bredesen

(RFQ) leading to the selection of three design teams to participate in Phase II, the competition itself.

During Phase I, a selection committee appointed by the Mayor reviewed the responses to the RFQ and invited seven firms to interview. The committee then selected three design teams to participate in Phase II. Those teams were led by the firms of Robert A. M. Stern Architects and Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates of New York City, and Michael Graves Architect of Princeton, NJ.

The kickoff to Phase II was a public event at which Mayor Bredesen expressed his vision for the library and gave his charge to the design teams. The designers met with library department-heads during two separate workshops at which staff could respond to each teams' questions and proposals. This provided an invaluable opportunity for the library's ultimate users to ensure that the facility would meet their needs. Reports of these meetings were shared with members of the jury selected to judge final submissions.

The six-member jury consisted of four award-winning architects and two library experts, some local and some of national reputation. But before the jury reviewed the final submissions, the citizens of Nashville were invited to view and comment on the designs of the three finalists at a public exhibition. The designers were then given an opportunity to present their proposals to the jury and respond to questions. The ultimate winner was the team of Robert A. M. Stern Architects in tandem with the Nashville firm Hart-Freeland-Roberts.

While competitions can be time-consuming and expensive, Schluntz believes they are necessary for a building that should be expected to last for 50 or 100 years. The competition process may not lengthen, and in some cases may actually shorten, the design process. Competitions can also engender public support for a project by providing opportunities for public input and raising public awareness.

It certainly provides short- and long- term benefits to the public on

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COMING SOON TO A PBS STATION NEAR YOU

Becoming Good Neighbors: Enriching America's Communities By Design is the latest in an ongoing video series developed for public television by the American Architectural Foundation as part of its Accent on Architecture Program. The series was created to demonstrate how design can be used as a tool to address the problems of America's cities. The series is hosted by Charles Royer, former mayor of Seattle, now with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Initiative.

In 1997 the Foundation released the first film, *Back from the Brink: Saving America's Cities By Design. Back from the Brink* focused on how Chattanooga, Tennessee, Portland, Oregon, and Suisun City in the San Francisco Bay area used architecture and planning as tools for restoring a sense of community, improving livability, and enhancing economic vitality.

Becoming Good Neighbors examines how citizen involvement in decisions affecting the built environment has helped to conquer the isolation that pervades many cities, suburbs and towns. That process is examined in four communities, each engaged in an ongoing process, confronting its own challenges and using design in its own way to strengthen the sense of community.

In 1995, Gaylord, Michigan, a small town of 3500, built a new high school. The town overcame huge

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MICD: XXIV
October 1998

Charlottesville, Virginia

RESOURCE TEAM

Robert Campbell, FAIA
architect & writer

Maurice Cox
architect & community activist

Michael Dobbins, FAIA, AICP
planning director & architect

Grant Jones, FASLA
landscape architect

Fred Kent, III
public space consultant

Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Hon. AIA
Charleston, SC (keynote)

Brenda Case Scheer, AICP
urban designer & educator

Michael J. Stanton, FAIA
architect (guest speaker)

MAYORS AND DESIGN ISSUES

Mayor Kenneth Barr, Fort Worth, TX: Relocation of an elevated highway adjacent to downtown provides opportunity to create an urban boulevard. What kinds of development should be sought and what design principles followed to create a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environment?

Mayor Preston Daniels, Des Moines, IA: An entertainment center is planned to act as a catalyst for further redevelopment downtown. How can the city incorporate the center and the existing farmers market into an open-air pedestrian street? What design elements should be included in the plan?

Mayor Clarence Harmon, St. Louis, MO: Three alternative concepts for the rehabilitation and reuse of the Old Post Office and some adjacent historic buildings are being considered. What criteria should be used in determining locations for each element of the plan and what design elements would help make the urban plaza the "heart of downtown"?

Mayor Dannel Malloy, Stamford, CT: A plan for the redevelopment of public places along the Mill River Corridor through downtown is underway. How can residential and commercial development be integrated into the plan and how should river access be promoted?

Mayor Patrick McManus, Lynn, MA: A new five school building program includes one to be located in the downtown core. How might a school in the downtown influence redevelopment efforts and how can it encourage mixed-use development?

Mayor Mike Morrison, Waco, TX: The Cottonbelt Railroad Depot is being redeveloped into a market. How can the city promote pedestrian traffic between the farmers' market and downtown?

Mayor Gary Podesto, Stockton, CA: A new California State University Stanislaus Campus has located in a historic district. How can the city revitalize the historic district in light of the new campus?

MICD: South
November 1998

Georgia Institute of Technology

held in Chattanooga, Tennessee

RESOURCE TEAM

Richard Dagenhart
urban designer & architect

Douglas Allen
landscape architect

Craig Barton
architect & educator

Simeon Bruner
real estate developer

Elaine Carmichael
Economist

David Crockett
city commissioner

Marleen Davis
architect & educator

Thomas Davis
urban designer & architect

Michael Dobbins, FAIA, AICP
planning director & architect

Thomas Hylton
author

Stroud Watson
urban designer & architect

MAYORS AND DESIGN ISSUES

Mayor Floyd Adams, Savannah, GA: A site plan for a model block to revitalize a historic neighborhood has been developed. How should the city work with the neighborhood association and how should design guidelines be established?

Mayor Henry Gonzalez, Brownsville, TX: There are three separate parts of downtown. Where should an event center be located and how can the three parts be better linked and contribute to the historic downtown?

Mayor Neisen O. Kasdin, Miami Beach, FL: An RFQ for a six acre parking lot conversion in the heart of town will soon be distributed. What critical issues should be considered in the proposal evaluation and selection process?

Mayor Jon Kinsey, Chattanooga, TN: The Electric Power Board Building is occupied by the Board and owned by the city. How can the city convert the building for residential use while providing ample parking for residents and downtown visitors?

Mayor Patricia Lamar, Oxford, MS: Traffic problems, especially in the town square have led the city to seek innovative solutions. How should the city address its long-term transportation problems?

Mayor Rosemary Waldorf, Chapel Hill, NC: A downtown parking lot is planned to be developed. What important design decisions should be made? How can the city gauge the economic feasibility of the project?

Mayor Jere Wood, Roswell, GA: Roswell's historic street is plagued with high traffic volumes, high speeds and a high accident rate. What key design strategies should be used to respect the historic area and benefit the community?

MICD: West November 1998

University of California

Berkeley, California

RESOURCE TEAM

Dena Belzer
economic development

Harrison Fraker, FAIA
architect & urban designer

Robert Harris, FAIA
architect & urban design

Randy Hester
community design facilitator

Allan Jacobs
urban planner & designer

Donlyn Lyndon, FAIA (chair)
urban designer & architect

William R. Morrish
urban & landscape designer

Samina Quraeshi
urban design consultant

Charles Royer
former mayor

Ann Vernez-Moudon
urban designer & planner

MAYORS AND DESIGN ISSUES

Mayor Garret Nancolas, Caldwell, ID: An interstate passes through the city, but exits are not well marked. How can the exits become gateways to the city and what elements will improve the image of downtown so it becomes a vital center of the community?

Mayor Sandra J. Levin, Culver City, CA: Hayden Tract consists mostly of mixed-use industrial structures with high traffic volumes. A redevelopment plan for high-tech related office space is being considered. What is an appropriate land use mix for the area, and what should the city do with an abandoned spur line in the area?

Mayor Mike Kadas, Missoula, MT: The East Reserve District is a new neighborhood not far from the main center of downtown activity. What type of street network and residential development pattern can foster a strong sense of place that links the district to the city center?

Mayor Skye Richendrfr, Mt. Vernon, WA: A flood plain, dikes and flood barriers challenge riverfront development. How can the floodplain be turned into an asset and help tie both sides of the riverfront to the city?

Mayor Sue Lampert, San Mateo, CA: Downtown is currently working on three projects, a transit center, cinema/parking garage, and a new mixed-use facility. How should the surrounding area be developed to improve pedestrian access and create a more cohesive whole?

Mayor Sharon Wright, Santa Rosa, CA: Courthouse Square and Railroad Square are separated by a large enclosed shopping mall that has only one major pedestrian entrance. How can the city connect these elements along with a river restoration in a pedestrian friendly way?

MICD: Northeast November 1998

University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

RESOURCE TEAM

Eugenie L. Birch, AICP
planner

Edward J. Blakely
planner

Todd W. Bressi
urban designer

W. Joseph Duckworth
builder/development

Alexander Garvin
urban planner/real estate

Maxine Griffith, AICP
urban planner

Gary Hack, AICP
planning/urban design

Paul R. Levy
development

Laurie D. Olin, ASLA, Hon. AIA
landscape architect

Witold Rybczynski, Hon. FAIA
architect/writer

Brenda Case Scheer, AICP
planner/urban designer

Richard Wesley, AIA
architect/environmental designer

MAYORS AND DESIGN ISSUES

Mayor James Doyle, Pawtucket, RI: Redevelopment of a State Pier is aimed at recapturing the river as a vital resource. What type of development and design elements should be included and how can it be linked to other riverfront developments?

Mayor Albert Jurczynski, Schenectady, NY: Four scenarios were developed to transform historic State Street. What criteria should be used to determine which scenario is most appropriate?

Mayor Lucian Pawlak, New Britain, CT: A European Village is being planned for Broad Street. What design elements can create a European Market atmosphere and how can the city prevent loss of existing business during construction?

Mayor Charlie Smithgall, Lancaster, PA: Rehabilitation of a historic building complex in Penn Square is planned. What design elements will ensure appropriate mixed-use to fit it into the overall downtown revitalization effort?

Mayor Kaileigh Tara, Lewiston, ME: Two Squares are separated by an enclosed shopping mall with one major pedestrian entrance. How can the city connect these elements along with a river restoration in a pedestrian friendly way?

Mayor William Veroneau, Concord, NH: Major land and streetscape changes are planned for "Opportunity Corridor." How can the city incorporate a connection of the downtown, through this area to the river?

Mayor James Whelan, Atlantic City, NJ: An overpass and development of both sides of Arctic Avenue are planned. How can the overpass be designed to minimize negative impacts and how can the appearance of the corridor be enhanced?

(Nashville, continued from page 2)

the options that will affect their public environment," says Schluntz.

One criticism of limited competitions, as expressed by Stanley Collyer, Jr., editor of *Competitions* magazine, is that they often encourage participating design teams, who know they have only a few competitors, to exceed set spending limits in hopes of winning an important commission. This, in effect, provides clients with discounted services at the expense of the designers.

Schluntz worked to limit the expenses of the participating firms by limiting the material that could be submitted and keeping the response time short. For the Nashville Library, a subsidy of $50,000 was paid to each of the three teams to compensate them for the time spent preparing their entries. There was no requirement for a highly detailed model, which can be extremely expensive to produce, and time for developing the presentation was limited to less than three months.

Collyer also believes that limited competitions restrict major commissions to a handful of so-called "star architects." In a recent editorial, Collyer cited the results of the open competition for the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, and the subsequent selection of the design of then-unknown Maya Lin, as proof that young architects should be given the opportunity to compete.

Says Schluntz, "a well-run competition, and I stress *well-run*, has the ability to enhance the probability of achieving design excellence." From the public perspective, "a design competition raises the level of interest and expectation, and an educated citizenry raises the bar for the architects." According to the AIA's design competition handbook, elements of a successful competition include a thorough and carefully written program, fair and precise competition rules, clearly stated submission requirements, a realistic schedule, a qualified jury, appropriate prizes, and arrangements for publicizing the winning design.

In a profile of the competition published in the Fall 1998 issue of *Competitions,* Kreyling expresses some regret at the "uncompromisingly classical" nature of the winning design but acknowledges Stern's assertion that the library is "in keeping with the classical tradition of Nashville's public architecture." Many urban designers, however, feel that good urbanism transcends style, and in that sense the library succeeds. Mayor Bredesen has gone a long way in giving downtown Nashville a "heart."★

(Coming Soon, continued from page 2)

financial and organizational obstacles to create a state-of-the-art facility that has become a focal point and shared resource that binds the town in ways that were impossible before.

Unlike many traditional New England towns, Mashpee, Massachusetts, had no town square, no focal point, and no coherent sense of itself. In 1985 a local partnership began to transform a dreary strip development into a true town center with pedestrian-friendly streets lined with new commercial and civic buildings. The next phase will include residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.

In 1986, tiny Bonaparte, Iowa, was down to its last Main Street store when four residents decided to keep the town alive. They created a for-profit corporation and raised $100,000 in $2000 increments from local residents to buy a handful of historic downtown buildings and rehabilitate them for new uses. While much remains to be done, the town is on the road back to prosperity.

Though each story is far from complete–these are real places, with real problems–they offer hope to those seeking what these places have already found–the true spirit of community and an understanding of what it takes to become good neighbors. For additional information, contact The American Architectural Foundation at (202) 626-7514. ★

CITY DESIGN

The Mayors' Institute on City Design newsletter.

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is an initiative established by the National Endowment for the Arts and administered through a partnership with The United States Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation. The Mayors' Institute is dedicated to improving the design and livability of America's cities.

To learn more about the work of the Institute, please contact MICD Executive Director, Christine Saum or Program Coordinator, Gina Cooper at The Mayors' Institute on City Design, 1620 I Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006-4005 phone: (202) 463-1390 E-mail: micdinfo@micd.org.

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Presidential Design Awards 2000

Nominations are being sought for the Presidential Awards for Design Excellence and Millennium Awards for Design Excellence. These awards recognize excellence in Federal design. Eligible projects must have been sponsored, commissioned or supported by the Government of the United States of America, and completed by January 1, 1999. Eligible projects include buildings, bridges, parks, and masterplans.

Millennium awards will recognize projects that have made a significant contribution to the life of the Nation during this century. Entries must be received by April 8, 1999.

For entry forms or further information, please contact Thomas Grooms , U. S. General Services Administration, at (202) 501-1888 or thomas.grooms@gsa.gov. ★

C A L E N D A R

February 18–20, 1999
MICD: Southwest; Tempe, Arizona

February 25–27, 1999
MICD: Midwest; Cincinnati, Ohio

March 25–27, 1999
MICD: South; New Orleans, Louisiana

April 28–30, 1999
MICD XXV; Charlottesville, Virginia

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ALUMNI NOTES

At a gala during the 1999 Winter Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors, the USCM and Americans for the Arts will present **Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.,** Hon. AIA (MICD I, 1986) with an award for Local Government Leadership in the Arts.

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The National Civic League announced New Haven, CT (**Mayor John DeStefano, Jr.**, MICD 16, 1994); Rochester, NY, (**Mayor William A. Johnson, Jr.**, MICD 17, 1994); and Toledo, OH (**Mayor Carty Finkbeiner**, MICD 18, 1995) among its 1998 All-American Cities.

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West Palm Beach **Mayor Nancy Graham** (MICD 16, 1994), was named Public Official of the Year in the November 1998 issue of *Governing* Magazine. The magazine cited her successful downtown revitalization and redevelopment efforts.

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On November 13, the Waterfront Center in Washington, DC, announced its Top Honor Award for a Park, Walkway or Recreational Area under it's 11th Annual Awards Program to the City of Milwaukee, **Mayor John O. Norquist,** (MICD 13, 1992) and to Ken Kay, ASLA, designer, for the Milwaukee Riverwalk.

★

In September, the International Downtown Association presented an Award of Merit for Physical Improvements to the city of Milwaukee (**Mayor John Norquist**, MICD 13, 1992) for the Milwaukee RiverWalk; a Special Achievement Award for Economic Development to the City of Akron (**Mayor Donald Plusquellic**, MICD 21, 1996) for the adaptive reuse of a building that formerly housed a downtown department store; and an Award of Merit for Marketing and Communications to City of West Palm Beach (**Mayor Nancy Graham**, MICD 16, 1994) for *Clematis By Night*, a weekly event that draws thousands to downtown.

★

The 1998 City Livability Awards recognized many MICD alumni mayors: Jacksonville, FL (**Mayor John Delaney**, MICD 20, 1996) received the Outstanding Achievement Award, along with Quincy, MA, (**Mayor James Sheets**, MICD: Northeast 1992); Trenton, NJ (**Mayor Douglas H. Palmer**, MICD 12, 1992); Reno, NV (**Mayor Jeff Griffin**, MICD 22, 1997); and Gilbert, AZ (**Mayor Cynthia Dunham**, MICD: West, 1997). MICD Alums receiving Honorable Mention included: Allentown, PA (**Mayor William Heydt**, MICD 19, 1995); Louisville, KY, (former **Mayor Jerry E. Abramson**, MICD 12, 1992); Macon, GA (**Mayor Jim Marshall**, MICD 21, 1996); and New Haven, CT (**Mayor John DeStafano**, Jr., MICD 16, 1994).

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In April, the Treasure Valley Partnership was declared a "Founder of a New Northwest" by Sustainable Northwest and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of the President's Council on Sustainable Development. The Partnership includes mayors from seven cities and two counties in Idaho's Treasure Valley, and is a direct outgrowth of Boise **Mayor Brent Coles**' participation in MICD: West in 1994. Caldwell **Mayor Garrett Nancolas** (MICD: West 1998) is also a member. The Partnership is also a finalist in the first annual Joint Center Sustainable Community Awards Program.

★

At its annual conference in April, the American Planning Association recognized Chattanooga (current **Mayor Jon Kinsey**, MICD: South 1998; and former **Mayor Gene Roberts**, MICD 3, 1987) for its Tennessee Riverpark in an Outstanding Planning Award for Implementation.

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